

SENATE BILL 1550

By Burks

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,
relative to reading instruction and curriculum.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, is amended by adding Sections 2 through 7 of this act as a new, appropriately designated part.

SECTION 2. The general assembly finds and declares that reading proficiency is a gateway skill necessary for all of Tennessee students to achieve the academic goals required for full participation in today's society.

SECTION 3. It is the legislative intent of this act that every elementary school shall:

- (1) Provide a comprehensive schoolwide reading program that enables all children to learn to read well before completing the elementary grades;
- (2) Provide diagnostic reading assessments and intervention services for those students who need them to learn to read at the proficient level;
- (3) Ensure quality instruction by highly trained teachers; and
- (4) Provide high quality library media programs.

SECTION 4. As used in this part, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (1) "Comprehensive reading program" means a program that emphasizes the essential components of reading including, but not limited to, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and connections between writing and reading acquisition and motivation to read;
- (2) "Reading" means the process of comprehending the meaning of written text by depending on:
 - (A) The ability to use phonics skills, that is, knowledge of letters and sounds, to decode printed words quickly and effortlessly, both silently and aloud;

(B) The ability to use previously learned strategies for reading comprehension; and

(C) The ability to think critically about the meaning, message, and aesthetic value of the text;

(3) "Reading diagnostic assessment" means an assessment that identifies a struggling reader and measures the reader's skills against established performance levels in the essential components of reading. The purpose is to screen for areas that require intervention in order for the student to learn to read proficiently;

(4) "Reading intervention program" means short-term intensive instruction in the essential skills necessary to read proficiently that is provided to a student by a highly trained teacher. This instruction may be conducted one-on-one or in small groups, shall be research-based, reliable, and replicable, and shall be based on the ongoing assessment of individual student needs; and

(5) "Reliable, replicable research" means objective, valid scientific studies that:

(A) Include rigorously defined samples of subjects that are sufficiently large and representative to support the general conclusions drawn;

(B) Rely on measurements that meet established standards of reliability and validity;

(C) Test competing theories, where multiple theories exist;

(D) Are subjected to peer review before their results are published; and

(E) Discover effective strategies for improving reading skills.

SECTION 5.

(a) There is created in the state treasury a fund to be known as the "reading diagnostic and intervention fund". Moneys deposited in the fund shall be invested for the benefit of the fund pursuant to § 9-4-603. Moneys in the fund shall not revert to the

general fund of the state, but shall remain available to be used by the department of education exclusively for the purposes of this act.

(b) The fund is created to help teachers and library media specialists improve the reading skills of struggling readers in the elementary grades. The department of education shall administer a program of renewable, two-year grants to schools to support teachers in the implementation of reliable, replicable research-based reading intervention programs that use a balance of diagnostic tools, and instructional strategies that emphasize phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and connections between writing and reading acquisition and motivation to read, to address the diverse learning needs of those students reading at low levels.

SECTION 6. The department of education shall establish criteria to:

- (1) Identify eligible grant applicants, taking into consideration how the grant program described in this act relates to other grant programs;
- (2) Specify the criteria for acceptable diagnostic assessments and intervention programs;
- (3) Specify the criteria for acceptable ongoing assessment of each child to determine his or her reading progress;
- (4) Establish the minimum evaluation process for an annual review of each grant recipient's program and progress;
- (5) Identify the annual data that must be provided from grant recipients;
- (6) Define the application review and approval process;
- (7) Establish matching requirements deemed necessary;
- (8) Define the professional development and continuing education requirements for teachers, library media specialists, administrators, and staff of grant recipients;
- (9) Establish the conditions for renewal of a two-year grant; and

(10) Specify other conditions necessary to implement the purposes of this act.

SECTION 7. The department of education shall require that a grant applicant provide assurances that the following principles shall be met if the applicant's request for funding is approved:

(1) A research-based comprehensive schoolwide reading program shall be available;

(2) Intervention services shall supplement, not replace, regular classroom instruction;

(3) Intervention services shall be provided to struggling primary program readers within the school based upon ongoing assessment of their needs; and

(4) A system for informing parents of struggling readers of the available family literacy services within the district shall be established.

SECTION 8. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.